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SUBJECT: TRIPARTITE DEMARCHE: SWITZERLAND ALIGNS WITH EU
AND GRULAC CONSENSUS

REF: SECSTATE 78740

1.(SBU) Switzerland plans to support the Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, in large measure due to the support of Latin American (GRULAC) and EU member states for the current text. Poloff joined visiting New Zealand DCM Stephen Harris (based in Berlin) for a June 9 meeting with Swiss DFA Human Rights Chief Wolfgang Amadeus Bruehlhart and his deputy Norbert Baerlocher. Harris and Poloff underscored the U.S., New Zealand, and Australian concerns about the shortcomings of the chairman's compromise text (ref a). Reiterating our mutual interest in achieving a consensus agreement on the rights of indigenous peoples, we urged the Swiss to support further consultation on, and adaptation of, the compromise text to meet concerns over the sovereignty over resources, collective vs. individual rights, and separatism. Harris suggested that a "friends of the chair" group could be appointed to work out a solution.

2.(SBU) Bruehlhart replied that Switzerland had been working for 20 years toward the declaration, eleven of those years in the working group. He said that the Swiss understood the needs of certain countries, but denied that the current text could be used to justify separatist movements. Baerlocher agreed, noting that two of his previous posts -- Indonesia and Mexico -- faced more worrisome separatist issues and nonetheless supported the declaration. Key for Bruehlhart was that the GRULAC countries of Latin America were in support of the declaration's text; this included the Mexican chair of the Human Rights Council. He said that this fact had brought the EU to consensus in support. Since they doubted an international consensus was possible, the Swiss thought the current compromise text was the best achievable.

3.(SBU) Bruehlhart also disagreed with Poloff's assertion that starting out the HRC on such a controversial issue was necessarily negative. He reminded Poloff of the USG's pressure on Switzerland to push through the Third Protocol on the Geneva Conventions, adopting the new emblem, notwithstanding substantial opposition. Taking on a tough issue would reflect well on the HRC. Baerlocher said that he only knew of four countries opposing the current text: the United States, New Zealand, Australia, and Russia. He conceded that some countries with potential misgivings might be holding back in order to allow the HRC an initial success.

Comment

4.(SBU) New Zealand DCM Harris shared with Poloff that the NZ Mission in New York had detected some weakening in Mexican support for the current text. If, as Bruelhart suggested, the EU consensus was built on GRULAC consensus, our approaching Mexico and other Latin American capitals might be the only means to changing the current text.

Urban